

WHERE THE OLD WEST STAYED YOUNG

took orders from the foreman in charge. Both Hi Bernard of the Two Bar and Billy Wear of the Sevens had the reputation of working the devil out of the reps and saving their own men and horses. That is, they routinely assigned the reps to ride the longest circles. Any group of human beings numbers some malingerers, and there were cowboys who maneuvered with a view to obtaining the easy work assignments. They were known as slackwads, and it usually didn't take a foreman long to spot them. Says Charley Neiman, one-time foreman of the L 7: "In one roundup we noticed that some of the men would hang back when the foreman was assigning the work. Of course the first men assigned would be sent on the longest rides, while the later ones drew the short rides almost every day . . . Willis Rankin, foreman of Haley's, was running the roundup, and we both noticed that we had an unusually large number of 'slackwads' as we commonly called the 'short ride' slackers. Instead of telling-off a number of men, and assigning them to do a specific job, Rankin called for . . . men to accompany me. No destination was given, and as the others had been assigned other jobs, the slackwads naturally thought I was going to take the short ride . . . I set out on an unnecessarily long swing . . . [and] I set a terrific pace . . ."⁶

Cowboys were a nomadic, wide-ranging breed of men. When Guy McNurlen took the witness stand during the trial of "Queen Ann" Bassett and Tom Yarberry on a charge of butchering out a heifer belonging to the Two Bar, he gave the roundup wagon as his place of residence; nor did anyone in the courtroom consider his answer unusual. Always on the move, whether on the job or between jobs, to many a cowpuncher "home" quite literally was wherever he hung his hat.⁷

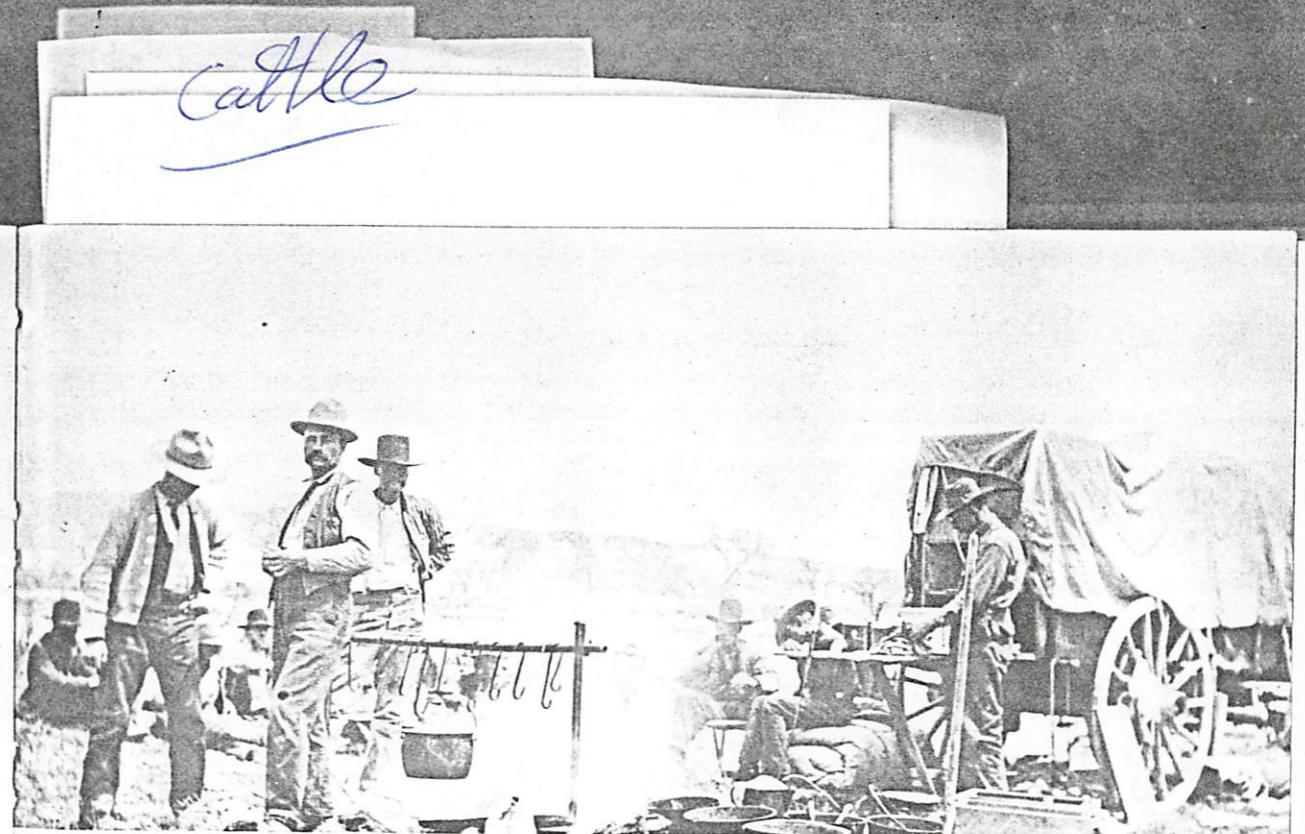
During the winter months, the cowboys who were lucky enough to be kept on the payroll lived in a cow camp bunkhouse on the winter range. Constructed of logs, this building customarily had

floor. Very generally it consisted of a single room, along whose walls ran a two-high tier of bunks constructed of rough lumber or small quaker or pine poles, over which the occupants spread hay or slough grass in lieu of mattresses.

Cowboys furnished their own bedrolls, these consisting of three or four blankets and/or quilts done up in a canvas bedsheet to protect them from the weather when being transported or used out of doors. Either in the center or at one end of the bunkhouse was a pot-bellied wood-burning stove. A table, on which reposed a coal-oil lamp and a deck or two of dog-eared playing cards, and a few homemade benches and chairs completed the furnishings.

As a rule there was a headquarters building on the premises, occupied by the foreman, which contained a sizable kitchen equipped with a cook stove or a kitchen range on which the cook prepared the meals. If the outfit was small, the cowboys did their own cooking. The chuckwagon, which accompanied the trail drive to railhead at shipping time generally returned with a sufficient supply of groceries to last through the winter; or a special trip might be made to Rawlins, Rifle, or some other supply point to obtain them. It was the foreman's responsibility to plan ahead and provide what was needed. According to Charley Neiman: ". . . the menu was very regular. We purchased flour in hundred-pound sacks . . . thick slabs of salt-side bacon cooked for lard as well as meat, sacks of white [navy] beans, canned corn and tomatoes, twenty-five-pound boxes of dried peaches, apples, apricots, and prunes, and large cans of baking powder. Coffee was purchased in whole bean form, and came in large sacks. The only brands of coffee we knew were Arbuckles and Lyons. We ground the beans in a special grinder. . . ."⁸

From the time the outfit broke its winter camp in the spring to accompany the shove up until it returned around January first—that is, for a period of eight or nine months—a cowboy's life re-



Chuck wagon at roundup in Lily Park in 1910. Note pot hooks over fire, man on bedroll lighting a cigarette after eating, cook at work at table.

being synonymous with food in cow-country parlance, a chuckwagon was literally that: a wagon in which food and the paraphernalia with which to prepare and serve it were carried. Pulled by either two- or four-horse teams depending on the terrain, the chuckwagon and everything pertaining to it came within the purview of that always arbitrary and frequently irascible individual, the camp cook.

The chuckwagon accommodated itself to the movements of the herd, and not vice versa. Within limits imposed by the foreman, however, the cook

Cowboys eating lunch. Lily Park roundup, 1910.

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was at liberty to select a site convenient to water, fuel, and, possibly, shade trees, although such amenities rarely were available. A second wagon known as the bed wagon, in which the bedrolls and personal effects of the cowboys, along with tents (if any), were transported, also accompanied the roundup. The cook drove the chuckwagon and the night hawk the bed wagon. Extra teams of work horses for use in connection with these vehicles customarily were included in the remuda. Sometimes—depending on the progress of the work—the chuckwagon might remain in one location

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into details here concerning it. more intelligent and independent on the trail they too tend to follow. Hence practically all the larger stock a dozen or so trail-wise steers and from year to year to lead the drives.

In virtue of these animals, which (depending on their efficiency) survived eleven or twelve and grew to huge fore they too ended up at the abattoir—relative steadiness. When faced by men on the trail, they were not nearly as tame as younger animals. Furthermore, pace-setters for the rest of the herd, course, guided or, in the vernacular, direction that the herd was to take. responsibility of the point riders. On either side were the swing riders, function it was to see that the main herd followed the point; and, lastly, came the drags.

In the drag positions worked amid confusion. They dealt with the weak, the lame, the knot-headed, and the perverse, having been separated from their mothers cows endeavored to take the lead of them. Four-footed malingerers trying to slink off and lie down shade of nearby clumps of cedars, and here, too, the deer flies, the

Beef herd held at the foot of Four Mile Hill near Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

John R. Burroughs Collection

green-headed flies, the buffalo gnats, and the mosquitoes swarmed for the purpose of making life as miserable as possible for man and beast. With the atmosphere so heavily laden with dust he scarcely could see, let alone breathe, the lot of a drag rider was unenviable.

Inasmuch as far greater responsibility devolved on the point and swing riders, the performance of their duties calling for both good judgment and skill, the drags usually were green hands—boys learning the business or the constitutionally inept. As a rule, when crossing new terrain, the wagon boss rode two or three miles in advance of the herd, selecting the most feasible route, returning from time to time to inform his point riders as to what lay ahead and in which direction they were to bend the herd.

In light of the above, it can be understood that the point riders were key men on a trail drive. A lessening of vigilance on their part might very well result in disaster. To illustrate. One of the best summer ranges in Northwestern Colorado was Slater Park in the Elkhead Mountains between the Little Snake and the Yampa Rivers. In earlier times this had been Pothook range, but latterly it was used by Clayton & Murnan's Reverse Four outfit. With the construction of the Denver, Salt Lake, and Pacific Railroad into the Yampa Valley, first Toponas, then Yampa, and finally Steamboat Springs became the preferred shipping points, and for many years the Reverse Four, the O V O,



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Cowboys pushing herd across the Yampa River in Lily Park during roundup.

the Bar Ell Seven, and the other Snake River outfits that summer-ranged in Slater and California Parks trailed out to the Yampa over what became known as the Beef Trail.

Crossing the easternmost ridge of the Elkhead Mountains, this route passed around the base of a high, rounded butte known as Pilot Knob, which from the time of the mountain men had served as the area's most prominent landmark. It so happens that on the eastern, or Yampa Valley, side of Pilot Knob, the country falls away abruptly to a vast semicircle of rimrock defining the northern and western limits of the Deep Creek Basin. In the fall of 1912, the Reverse Four pushed nearly

7,000 head of cattle over the Beef Trail to Steamboat Springs for shipment. In this instance the trail really was a trail, that is, it was well-marked from prior use. It so happened that as the herd rounded Pilot Knob, the point riders were dropping off—had, in fact, fallen back to pass the time of day with the swings, leaving the herd to its own devices with the expectation that the lead steers would stay on the trail.

In this they were mistaken. Once they rounded Pilot Knob, instead of following the trail, the lead steers continued on straight ahead until they suddenly found themselves on the rimrock overlooking Deep Creek Basin hundreds of feet below.

Roundup camp in Lily Park, 1910

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Adams and Pierce dissolved their partnership, the latter subsequently forming a partnership with Reef—I do not know. In any event, the Pierce-Reef combination was effective. Pierce had the know-how, Reef had the money, and they were in the right business in the right piece of country at the right time.

Jerry Pierce, like the Cary Brothers, got his start during the Leadville, Colorado, boom, his career in some particulars paralleling that of Ora Haley.

¹² Recorded at page 366, Book A, of the records of the Routt County Clerk and Recorder.

¹³ *History of the State of Colorado*, Frank Hall, First Edition, Vol. 4, Page 546..

prominent houses in Leadville . . . "¹³

Joe Reef was something of a tycoon and very much a diplomat; nor was Jerry Pierce his only partner in the range-cattle business in Northwestern Colorado. It is said that at one time Reef owned a considerable interest in the Reverse Four and like Ora Haley he is reputed to have been the silent partner in several other outfits. In addition, he was part owner of the Reef-Nuckolls Packing Plant in Pueblo, Colorado, thereby being among

valley and, in the beginning, ran them on the divide between the Eagle and Blue Rivers, both of which are tributary to the Colorado. Then, still making use of the Eagle River summer range, they trailed the stronger animals through to winter range on the lower Yampa and White Rivers, leaving the younger—and weaker—cattle on supplemental feed purchased from local ranchmen in Burn's Hole. A much more economical operation resulted when they finally moved their entire herd to the Yampa River. Even so, unlike other Northwestern Colorado cattlemen who, prior to the construction of the Denver, Salt Lake, and Pacific Railroad, used Rawlins or Wamsutter on the Union Pacific in Wyoming as their railhead, Pierce and Reef continued to favor Wolcott as a receiving and shipping point, although this entailed a considerably longer trail drive.

With their headquarters strategically located on the lower Yampa, the Sevens is said to have been the easiest of all of the big outfits to operate. On the shove-down, the Sevens cowboys merely cut out the older animals at the Yampa ranch and turned them on the range north of the river from where they drifted farther down country in the direction of Brown's Hole of their own accord. The younger stuff was let loose south of the Yampa, these also working lower toward Elk Springs, Skull Creek, and Rangely. Unlike the Two Circle Bar, with the possible exception of harvesting a small amount of hay for horse feed, the Sevens never at any time engaged in ranching; and, so far as I am able to ascertain, other than for the headquarters ranch comprised of a few hundred acres, did not own real estate in Northwestern Colorado.

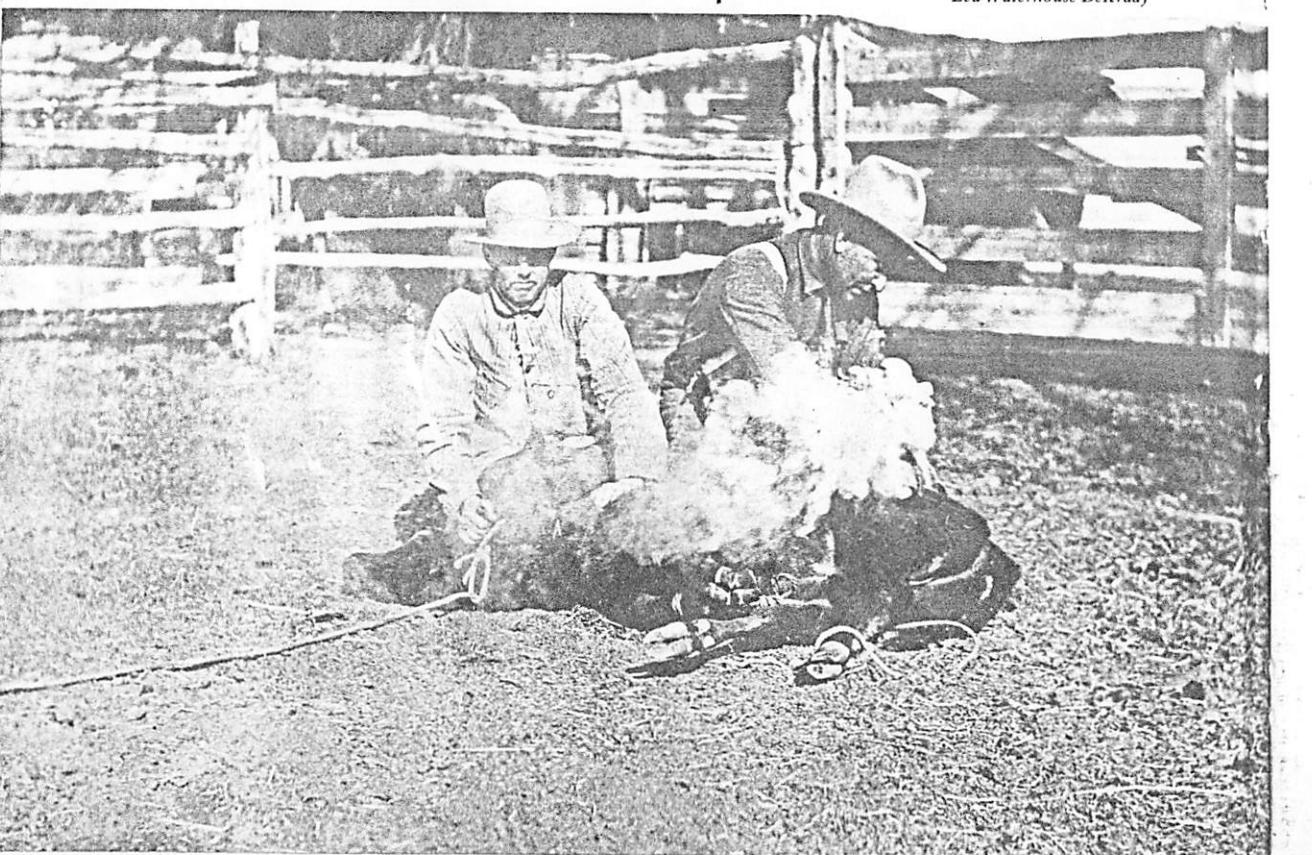
Tom Watson was the Sevens' first foreman. He was in charge of the big drive from Wolcott to the Yampa River range. Tom was succeeded by his brother, George Watson, who, like Hi Bernard, was one of the most effective range foremen in the

following this break that the Illinois banker became a silent partner in the Reverse Four, a well-managed outfit that operated on the Little Snake River range.

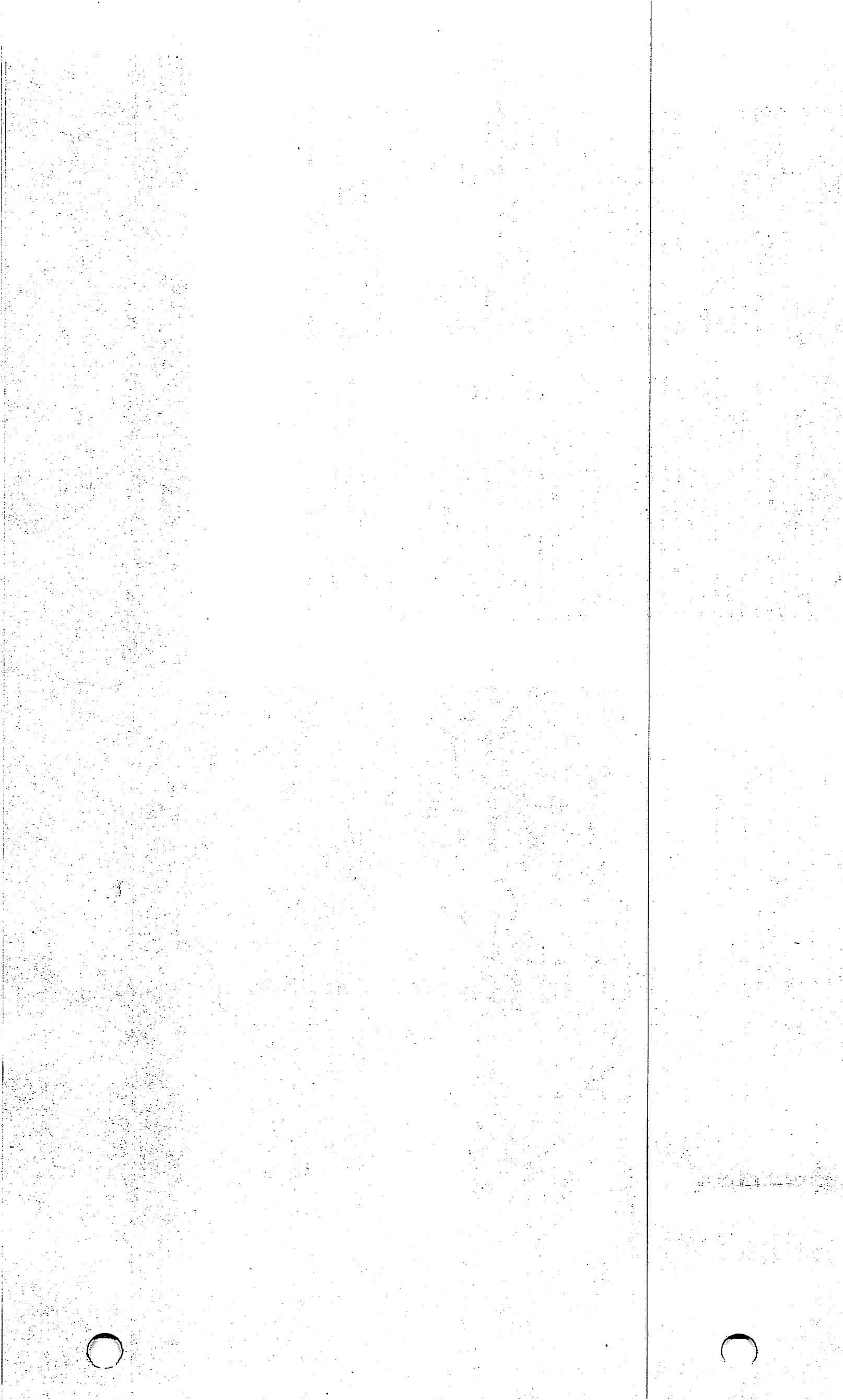
When he left the Sevens, George Watson bought a place on the eastern end of Blue Mountain north of Rangely. Here he ran a small herd of his own cattle for several years. Then, having sold to Lee Petersen, he returned to Wolcott, where he ran a ranch for a man named Welch whose daughter he subsequently married.

Billy Wear was raised in the Meeker county. He was the son of Sam Wear, whose wife was Mrs. J. N. Pierce's sister. A one-time game warden, Sam Wear was Sheriff of Rio Blanco County at the time of the Colorado-Utah sheep war, and we shall hear of him in that connection later on. A contemporary describes young Wear as having been "big, good-looking, and a better educated man than most of the cowboys who rode the range at that time." Everyone who knew him agrees that Billy was a hard drinker, it also being said that he was something of a phony—deficient in the customary arts and skills of a working cowboy. These same people admit, however, that, considering his long tenure as the Sevens wagon boss, he must have been competent in business matters and in seeing to it that the necessary work got done.

In 1911 Billy Wear married Pearl Reinhardt of Steamboat Springs. There is in existence an interesting photograph of this young couple, standing in front of the adobe ranch house at the Sevens headquarters. Later Pearl, a sister of Smalley and Streeter Reinhardt, rough and ready cowpunchers who rode for Charley Ayer's Bar Ell Seven, divorced Billy Wear. Billy then married Ruby Adams Cary, the divorced wife of the younger Robert Cary. Ruby Adams was the sister of Jesse Adams, long-time wagon boss of the Reverse Four.



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are you do?"

aggeration to say that, from the well past the turn of the century, territory of Northwestern Colorado attempted big Wyoming sheep herds to migrate southward, and finally large (and many small) cattle moved from it. Characterized by extremes, the motives giving rise to the were economic. Although the sagebrush of western Wyoming provided the adequate winter range and spring they cast covetous eyes on North's high-country pastures where, after months, lambs destined for the market in from 25 to 35 pounds more would elsewhere.

the cattlemen claimed the Colorado of prior use. They also were honestly held misconception that the ground and that cattle would go where they had been. A more common was that sheep grazed too much forage down to the roots, leaving through which they passed a trail it had been visited by locusts. before the federal Forest Service began range management, decades before the Interior's Division of public domain was the self-interested often meant the greed, of the lives. Theoretically Jack Edwards grass was free to all comers. Activities were dominant in Northwest whereas sheepmen controlled the range Southwestern Wyoming. It has always been so. We have seen how land, absentee-owned, and totally unscrupulous, the Middlesex Land and a product of the cattle gold rush, responsible for the introduction of cattle in the country north of Brown's

land by the United States government to a depth of ten miles on either side of its right-of-way through the public land states. Undoubtedly the cattlemen, including the Middlesex Company, were aware of this. Inasmuch as they were the Union Pacific's best customers, in all probability it never occurred to them that these railroad lands might not always be as freely available to them as was the public domain itself.

Then as today, business was business. With the demise of the Middlesex outfit, the sheepmen saw their opportunity and seized it. The cattlemen awoke one morning to find that sheepmen, notably the Cosgriff brothers, Thomas and John, Scotsmen who had come West from Vermont in the seventies, Tim Kinney, Jack Edwards, and others who fully reciprocated the hatred the cattlemen felt

coup, the sheepmen gained an invaluable—and invulnerable—operating base, whereas the cattlemen remained wholly dependent upon the public domain.

Thanks largely to the extremely able and conservative Cosgriffs, who soon branched out into banking, the sheepmen also were more soundly financed than the cattlemen, many of whom were prone to speculate in steers. It follows that, although the cattlemen seemingly held the advantage in the struggle which ensued because of numerical superiority as well as prior tenure, the sheepmen were in a much better strategic position for the long pull. Furthermore, as the range war passed its swash-buckling climax, the sheepmen proved to be far more adept in the realm of public relations—a factor which, with the advent of the



Sheep herder's camp on the Routt National Forest.

United States Forest Service

and then winding them into large balls. Several gunny-sacks of rag balls were required to make an ordinary size carpet. The carpet was woven in yard widths, and then fitted into the rooms and sewn together. The carpet was laid on a matting of fresh straw to make it soft for walking and more wearable. Fortunate indeed were those who could afford a "carpet stretcher" to help tighten the carpet as it was laid. The few in Heber who did have them were generous in sharing with all the community.

Food had been the most important crop for the early settlers, and as they established gardens and cultivated fields they also introduced stock raising into the valley. Because of the heavy snows that fell during the winters, there were numerous mountain streams and springs and an abundance of meadow-lands. Some wondered if the summer season would be long enough to make stock raising a sound economic possibility, but others reasoned that they could never know until they tried it, so several people brought small flocks of sheep and cattle into the valley in 1860.

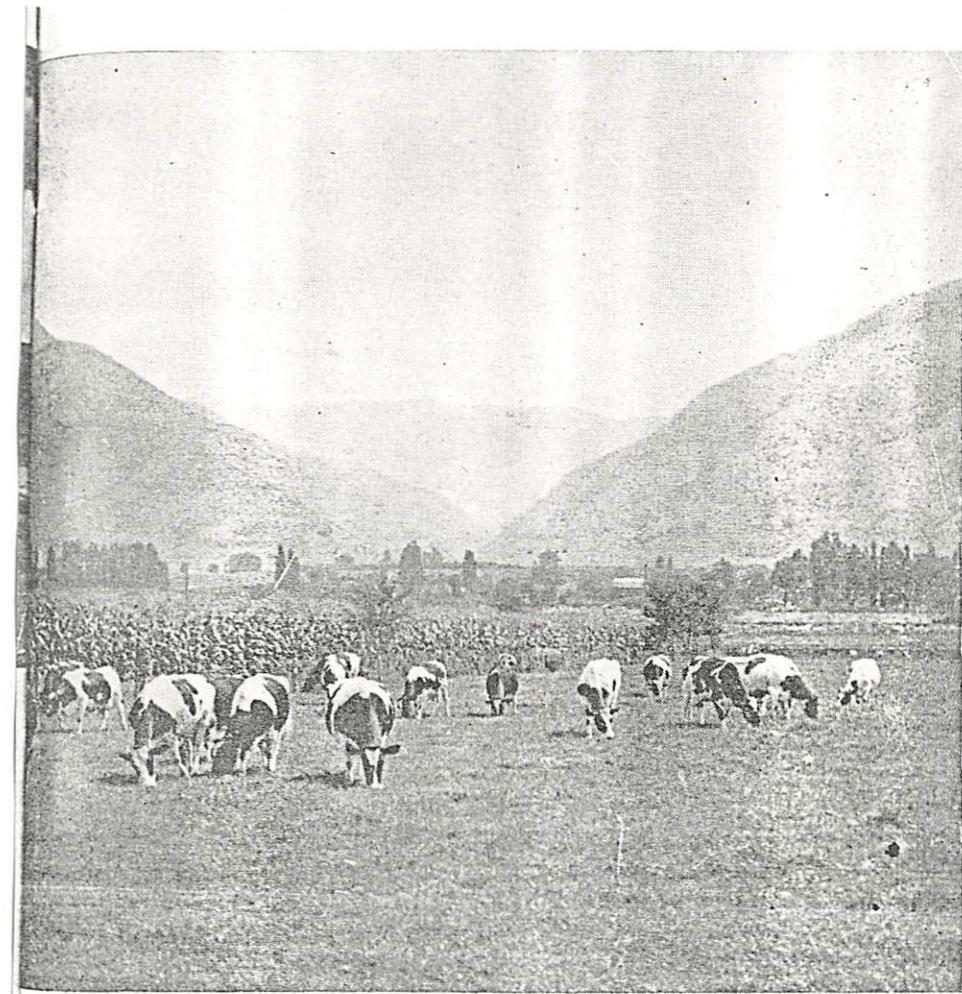
President Brigham Young called John M. Murdoch, a shepherd from Scotland and a convert to the Church, to supervise a herd of sheep for the Church. However, by the time he arrived in Utah the sheep had been sold, so Mr. Murdoch came to Heber in 1860 and pioneered co-operative herding. Those who had sheep banded them together in the co-op herd and Mr. Murdoch took charge of them on range-lands in the summer and on southern ranches in the winter. The venture proved very successful, and families who before had been unable to care for sheep now found it possible to own a herd. As people developed their own individual herds, however, the co-op idea soon dwindled. Some of the first sheep owners were the Jacob brothers, Lindsay brothers, Murdochs, Clydes, Clotworthy, Coleman, Austin, Smith, Jessop Thomas and the Fitzgeralds.

The sheep industry grew substantially over the years, and at one time there were more milk fed lambs shipped out of Heber than from any other point in the United States.

The cattle industry grew also, supplying at first the needs of those in the valley and eventually providing beef and other meat products for shipment to Denver and many eastern cities. Some of the major owners of cattle included A. M. Murdock, J. W. Clyde, John Carroll, William Averett and sons, John Witt and sons, the Carlises, Giles, Cummings and Abram Hatch and Sons.

DAIRYING

Dairying in the valley began with individuals who owned one or two cows and would sell their surplus milk or dairy products to neighbors. Later, creameries were established to collect the milk and distribute it on a large scale. Three such creameries have existed in Heber. One,



Although there is slightly more than 2½ per cent of the State's 54,000 acres under irrigation the State supports a cattle and dairy industry of 560,000 head. The total State income from sheep, wool, range cattle and dairy stock exceeds \$75,000,000 annually.